

House Bill 854

By: Representatives Mayo of the 91st, Taylor of the 55th, and Sellier of the 136th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

To amend Part 3 of Article 6 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to educational programs under the "Quality Basic Education Act," so as to provide for early admission into kindergarten or first grade for students who complete pre-kindergarten or kindergarten in a private program under certain conditions; to provide for assessment committees; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

Part 3 of Article 6 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to educational programs under the "Quality Basic Education Act," is amended in Code Section 20-2-150, relating to eligibility for enrollment, by revising subsection (a) and adding a new subsection to read as follows:

"(a) Except as otherwise provided by subsection (b) or (b.1) of this Code section, all children and youth who have attained the age of five years by September 1 shall be eligible for enrollment in the appropriate general education programs authorized in this part unless they attain the age of 20 by September 1 or they have received high school diplomas or the equivalent. This shall specifically include students who have reenrolled after dropping out and who are married, parents, or pregnant. Special education students shall also be eligible for enrollment in appropriate education programs through age 21 or until they receive high school or special education diplomas or the equivalent; provided, however, that they were enrolled during the preceding school year and had an approved Individualized Education Program (IEP) which indicated that a successive year of enrollment was needed. Other students who have not yet attained the age of 21 by September 1 or received high school diplomas or the equivalent shall be eligible for enrollment in appropriate education programs, provided they have not dropped out of school for one quarter or more. Each local unit of administration shall have the authority to assign students who are married,

parents, or pregnant or who have reenrolled after dropping out for one quarter or more to programs of instruction within its regular daytime educational program, provided that a local unit of administration may develop and implement special programs of instruction limited to such students within the regular daytime educational program or, at the option of the student, in an alternative program beyond the regular daytime program; provided, further, that such programs of instruction are designed to enable such students to earn course credit toward receiving high school diplomas. These programs may include instruction in prenatal care and child care. Each local unit of administration shall have the authority to provide alternative programs beyond the regular daytime educational program. Unless otherwise provided by law, the State Board of Education shall have the authority to determine the eligibility of students for enrollment. It is declared to be the policy of this state that general and occupational education be integrated into a comprehensive educational program which will contribute to the total development of the individual."

"(b.1)(1) A child who completes kindergarten in a private school in this state which meets the requirements of subsection (b) of Code Section 20-2-690 shall be eligible for enrollment in first grade in the appropriate general or special education programs authorized in this part if such child will attain the age of six by December 31, is approved by an assessment committee pursuant to paragraph (3) of this subsection, and is otherwise qualified.

(2) A child who completes a pre-kindergarten program in a private school in this state which meets the following requirements shall be eligible, at the discretion of the local board of education, for early enrollment in kindergarten in the appropriate general or special education programs authorized in this part if such child will attain the age of five by December 31, is approved by an assessment committee pursuant to paragraph (3) of this subsection, and is otherwise qualified:

(A) The pre-kindergarten program provides at least 6.5 hours of instructional services per day;

(B) The pre-kindergarten program provides a school calendar comprising 190 days, which includes 180 days of service to families and ten additional days for related activities, such as pre-planning, post-planning, staff development, and in-service days; and

(C) The pre-kindergarten program requires each parent to send their child to the program for 6.5 hours of instructional services per day, 180 days per school year and requires parents to agree that their child may be disenrolled if chronically tardy or absent or if not picked up on time at the end of the regular school day, unless enrolled in the extended day program.

63 (3) Upon the request of a parent or guardian of a child who meets the applicable criteria
64 in paragraph (1) or (2) of this Code section, the local school system shall convene an
65 assessment committee composed of a representative of the local board of education, a
66 teacher of the school in kindergarten or first grade, as appropriate, and the parent or
67 guardian. The committee shall approve or deny the early enrollment request based on the
68 readiness of the child as determined by the committee."

69 **SECTION 2.**

70 Said part is further amended in Code Section 20-2-151, relating to general and career
71 education programs, by revising paragraph (1) of subsection (b) as follows:

72 "(1)(A) All local school systems shall offer a full-day kindergarten program. For
73 purposes of this subsection, the term 'full-day ~~basis~~ kindergarten program' means a
74 student is provided classroom instruction for a minimum of four and one-half hours
75 daily for a 180 day school year.

76 (B) It is the policy of this state that the purposes of the kindergarten program shall be
77 to provide all children with an equal opportunity to become prepared for a successful
78 first grade experience and to acquire the foundation for academic progress throughout
79 the students' educational careers. To be eligible for enrollment in a state supported
80 kindergarten program, a child must attain the age of five by September 1, except as
81 otherwise provided by subsection (b) or (b.1) of Code Section 20-2-150;"

82 **SECTION 3.**

83 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.